

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Painted Button-quail on the Swan Coastal Plain** – The Painted Button-quail, *Turnix varia* is one of the 174 naturally occurring bird species on the Swan Coastal Plain of which 83 have declined markedly since European settlement and the subsequent habitat destruction (How and Dell, 1993, pp 28–47 In: *Urban Bush Management*. Aust. Inst. of Urban Studies). Storr and Johnstone (1988 *Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl.* 28, p 30) considered it to be now scarce and restricted to heavier soils on the eastern side of the coastal plain and also in Tuart forest on the western side.

Since 1986 we have been examining vertebrate fauna on bushland remnants of the Swan Coastal Plain between Wanneroo and Woodman Point and eastwards to the Darling Scarp. In total we have examined 28 remnants and the bird lists for 10 other localities. On only four locations have populations of the Painted Button-quail been observed.

Talbot Road Reserve is located on the Ridge Hill Shelf in Swan View and is mostly *Banksia* or Jarrah woodland on Bassendean sands with a small area of Marri woodland on gravels and clays. One Painted Button-quail was flushed in Jarrah/*Banksia* woodland on 29 October 1993.

Kings Park is located in the central part of the coastal plain on Spearwood sands and has a variety of habitat types. We conducted intensive bird censuses here for three years, 1993–1995. Painted Button-quails were not recorded until March 1995 when we obtained a total of six records in two different localities. They were present, together with their characteristic

feeding scrapes (see Dell, 1963, *West. Aust. Nat.* 8 p 186), on the northern and south-western sides of the Park.

Bold Park is on the Spearwood and Quindalup Dune System on the western side of the Swan Coastal Plain and has a range of habitats. Painted Button-quails have been regularly sighted including several breeding records. We have the following records:–

- regularly recorded in all survey sites throughout the Park since 1988. They are more frequently recorded in dune heath on the Quindalup system on the south-western side of the Park than other sites but have also been recorded in *Banksia* and Tuart woodland.
- a chick weighing 11 gm was recorded in pitfall trap in Tuart woodland on 21 January 1988.
- two chicks weighing 20 gm were recorded in pitfall trap in *Calothamnus* heathland on the Quindalup Dune System on 24 December 1995. A male but no other chicks was crouched nearby.

Dianella Bushland is in the central part of the coastal plain towards the eastern edge of the Spearwood Dune System. Painted Button-quails were recorded on several occasions in 1992 in Jarrah/*Banksia* woodland.

The Painted Button-quail appears to be a resident breeding species in Bold Park. Its status on the other sites is unclear. The fact that none were recorded in Kings Park in the first two, of the three survey years suggests that this species may be transient or a nomad on some urban bushland remnants. Painted Button-quails are

still regularly recorded in Jarrah forest and other habitats on the Darling Range. The Bold Park breeding records conform with the breeding season

listed in Storr and Johnstone (1988).  
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